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EARLY HISTORY OF PLEASANT HILL, McLEAN COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

BY D. F. TRIMMER.

Before there could be a Pleasant Hill, there had to be a farming community to support Pleasant Hill, and in order to have this, the Indian settlement, already early established here, must be gotten away with, or crowded out. John Patton and others, who settled here in 1829, did the crowding out, these Kickapoo people moved from here to Indian Grove and from there to Iowa, and later to the Far West. The Divine command was to "multiply and replenish the earth." The Indians multiplied but they did not replenish the earth, and, as farmers, were failures.

It is the writer's opinion, the Creator never intended these broad prairies and fertile fields to go uninhabited and untilled. The squalid squaw, no doubt, did raise in the old Indian field here, some corn, squashes, and a few beans, but to the Pattons belong the honor of being the first farmers of northern McLean County.

We have, from good authority, that Mr. Charles Lee, who was born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1790, that buffalo and elk, which were running wild here, disappeared between the dates of 1805 and 1812. In the year of 1854, a Kickapoo Indian from Kansas, visited Mr. Patton, at Pleasant Hill. This Indian was raised near here and knew Patton and his family. He preached one Sunday in the grove, and the entire community was in attendance. He spoke of his father and mother buried in the Indian cemetery, near-by, of his boyhood days spent in the country round about and of the wonderful change that had taken place in the twenty years that had elapsed since his

people were in the majority in this county. It was a day long to be remembered by all who heard him. He was about fifty years of age, and was a man of education and influence with his people.

We have a record showing Indian children attended school along with the white children; they came from Delaware Town, which was situated on the Mackinaw, near Thompson's Ford. The school was in the Henline Settlement, a few miles south-east from Pleasant Hill. This was in 1830. Mr. Sheldon was the teacher.

Pleasant Hill received its name as follows: Mrs. Smith, who lived on a hill, said, "that it seemed odd to date a letter from nowhere, when she wished to write her friends back in the old Kentucky home; she must have a name to date from, so she called her place, 'Poverty Hill'; and, as a woman was living near-by on a hill, fairer to look on than her own, advised her to call it Pleasant Hill." Later the postal authorities changed it to Selma.

Isaac Smalley was one of the pioneer teachers, preachers and farmers of Pleasant Hill. He came here from Joliet, Will County, Illinois, and was prominent in the city for a period of seventeen years, 1838 to 1855; he was a lover of his family, his church and his country. He was a leader in all good enterprises of the Methodist church, a good preacher, a friend of education, lower and higher, a valued counsellor in affairs, private and public import, and a public spirited citizen. While in Springfield, Illinois, where he had gone, hoping to get the Chicago and Alton Railroad Company to build their line through Pleasant Hill, but which he failed to get, owing to the opposition of Gen. Gridley, Jesse Fell, and others, who had interests in Lexington, Pontiac and other places, he contracted the dread disease of small-pox, which was the cause of his death, which occurred in 1855, and he is buried in the Pleasant Hill Cemetery. His benefit to the community did not lie merely in his active participation in public interests, but, by his simple blameless life, an example of good citizenship, of his relationship to individuals, to his family and community.

Mrs. Smalley was small in stature, but big in heart, and what she lacked in size, she made up in spirit and energy, and would discommode herself to accommodate a friend. It is said, that, she at one time gave up the last bed-room for a short time, that a new grocery store might be added to the town. Her husband, her home, children, her church and her friends were the supreme objects of her life, and received from her the fullest measure of devotion. "She looked well to the ways of her household, and ate not the bread of idleness, her children rise up and call her blessed."

After the passing of **Mr. Smalley**, she was married again to William Bratton, and, not unlike the first husband, he was a Methodist minister. **Mrs. Bratton** was born in Ohio, in 1808, and died at her home in Pleasant Hill, December 25, 1893. Mr. and Mrs. Smalley were the parents of six children, Cynthia, the youngest, and the only living, is the wife of Capt. Harry Lawrence, and resides in Lexington, where they are owners of valuable farm lands east and south of the city. Their children are also farmers, or farmers' wives, and are leading citizens of the community. Capt. Lawrence served through the War of the Rebellion, and now has a grandson, Lawrence VanDevender, who is serving in the World's War. Capt. Lawrence has a framed rare relic, which he prizes highly, it being seventy-five souvenir badges, one for each reunion attended by him since the close of the war.

M. R. Bullock, a surveyor, made the plat of Pleasant Hill for **Mr. Smalley**, in 1840, and Squire Jacob Spawr was the one witness to the papers. There were very few transfers made in the early days but what my uncle Jake did not have a hand in. Why shouldn't he? Coming to this community as he did in 1826 and living to the extreme age of 101 years. He ran a hotel or tavern, and was a great friend of Lincoln, Douglas and Davis, as well as other noted men who rode the circuit at that time. He took the first census, also kept the first postoffice that is, kept it mostly in his hat, very few people who sold their corn at ten cents per bushel or less, could afford to pay twenty-five cents for a postage stamp. **Mr. Spawr** left no money, but

he left, what is worth more than all things else, a good name.

The Christian character and sterling business qualities of Mr. and Mrs. Smalley, a fertile soil and beautiful landscape all combined, attracted a good class of people in quest of land and homes. We have no way in telling what the population of Pleasant Hill was at any time, but we do know Bloomington's population was but 180 in 1834. Mr. Smalley first lived in a log house, 10 by 12 feet and near John Patton, which was in the year of 1838.

In 1846, Absalom Enoch started Pleasant Hill's first store; and in the year 1847, Enoch and Foster bought from Isaac Smalley two lots, paying \$15 each for them. Each put up a small building and conducted a store. These lots being the same lots now owned by Mrs. Johnson Jenkins, who has the only store in the town at this date. It is quite convenient to have this little store, but I am very sure Mr. Jenkins will not be called upon to pay any income tax on the business transacted through the year.

Mr. Smalley had many good things to his credit, but nothing better than selling and delivering fruit trees over the county, which he did in the year of 1840 and later.

In 1836 the log house began to disappear and it was at this time John Patton had the first saw mill on the Mackinaw, one-half mile south of the town. In 1847, Rant Jenkins sawed lumber by horse power. The older buildings of the town are all unpainted; being constructed from hard, undressed lumber. George Webster of Paris, Illinois, started a store in opposition to Enoch and Foster, but was soon compelled to sell out to the older firm. Pleasant Hill was now doing a big business, trade came from Money Creek, Cheyney's Grove, Indian Grove, and for miles around. Goods were sold mostly on time, and some on eternity. The goods were brought in wagons from Peoria and Pekin.

Some of Pleasant Hill's early merchants were: Isaac Smalley, Enoch and Foster, George Webster, H. W. Underhill, Claggett and Mahan, G. M. Fox, W. D. Johnson, George Bradford, Rant Jenkins, Absalom Bills, Newton Denning, Joseph

Patton, Milton Smith, Samuel Paul, H. Foster, Joseph Enoch, Jacob Brown, Patton Wilson, Scott Arnold, G. H. Edwards. Jacob Wright, a burly blacksmith, and who was exposed to cholera in 1854, and being warned to be careful, said, "I am unafraid," worked all day in his shop and was buried between the setting and rising of the sun, accompanied by none, excepting the grave diggers.

In 1850, Coombs and Soule built a steam saw mill, the first of the kind in Lexington Township. James E. Ewing, of Bloomington, helped haul the machinery from Peoria. Joseph Patton built a cabinet shop; Bills and Denning made wagons and buggies, Jacob Brown, Wilson and Wright, were the blacksmiths. Scott Arnold was the owner of a carding mill, George Bradford pegged away in his boot and shoe shop and sold drugs. Isaac Smalley built a large building in the northeast part of town, for a select school or a ladies seminary. There were seven fire-places in the building. The first thing in the morning before breakfast, Mr. Smalley would invite and urge all to the assembly room for prayer service. The building being made from walnut and oak lumber is in a good state of repair, and is owned by Mrs. Harry Lawrence, the only living child of Mr. Smalley. The old historic building has been the wedding place of all the Lawrence children, and many of the older people as well. The builder of the old building was Jonathan Coon, one of the earliest and also one of the best carpenters in Money Creek Township.

Matthew Adams, who early lived near Pleasant Hill, was different from the Adams now days. He would loan money occasionally, but charge no interest. He had a standard price for corn, which was twenty-five cents per bushel, no difference how high the price in the market was, anything over twenty-five cents was considered by Mr. Adams exorbitant, and speculators could not buy his corn at all. Ella Wheeler Wilcox must have had Mr. Adams in mind, when she wrote the poem "Worth While" for we find such people but once in a while.

Milton Smith came to Pleasant Hill from Kentucky in 1835. A shrewd land agent has aptly said, "A fortune in land

is a fortune in hand, and while the world stands solid, the land stands safe, therefore buy land, good land." This is the very thing that Mr. Smith did, bought large tracts of land and held on to it. The elder son, Wm. A. Smith, who is a successful farmer and cattle feeder, is farming some of these lands early purchased by his father. George J., of the firm of Lindsay and Smith, also owns part of the original homestead. Louis H., lives in Lexington and takes pictures for a pastime, but conducts a dairy farm for a living; and has been the leader of the Presbyterian choir and superintendent of the Sunday School, farther back than the writer can remember, and he was, at one time, a member of the school board for a number of years.

Milton Smith was a strict Presbyterian and meetings were held at his home long before the church building was erected in Pleasant Hill, which was about the year of 1850; the old building was torn down and sold several years ago. Mr. Smith was a firm believer in and practiced the old adage, "Bring up a child in the way he should go and when older will not depart from it." Mr. Smith's home was one of the stopping places for Isaac Funk, who handled and drove thousands of cattle, being on the direct route from the Funk Farms to Chicago.

There is value in working with the hands, in being compelled by the stern necessity of poverty to earn one's way, Moses Cochran was one of these, coming to Pleasant Hill when about 21 years of age, and ten dollars was his total capital. He worked in De Board's brick yard at twenty-five cents a day. Here he earned \$15.00, but failed to collect a single cent of his hard earnings. He next engaged to Isaac Smalley at \$10.00 per month and board. While hauling wheat to Bloomington, March, 1852, his wagon mired in the mud on North Main Street, just south of where the Catholic Church now stands, each of the heavy sacks of wheat had to be carried to solid ground before the wagon could be removed; night was coming on, and Mr. Cochran was far from home, wet, cold, hungry and no money.

Young Cochran received for his year's work, \$50.00 and \$70.00 worth of town lots in Pleasant Hill, which he after-

wards sold for \$250.00, and invested this in land. He continued to buy land until he had accumulated almost four hundred acres of land. One trip was made to Ohio on horse back to borrow money to pay on land, it required four weeks to make the trip. At one time Mr. Cochran lost heavily by the failure of banks and money depreciations.

Mr. Cochran was of the Methodist faith and gave liberally for its support. He pledged \$15.00 for the building fund of the United Brethren Church at Pleasant Hill, the crash of 1857 came, and in place of the money pledged, he gave three weeks of hard work, hewing timbers for the frame with a broadaxe.

Mr. Cochran was much interested in the Pleasant Hill Cemetery, its finances, and its well kept condition is largely due to his efforts and influences. He attended Mr. Smalley through his last illness with small-pox, but escaped the dread disease himself. By industry, integrity and uprightness of character, Mr. Cochran overcame every obstacle that obstructed his pathway, leaving an honored family, a large bank account, valuable real estate, and a good name.

The first Methodist Church in Pleasant Hill was not a church at all. It was simply John Patton's log cabin, for here in it was the first class in northern McLean County organized in the year 1830. John Patton, his son-in-law, Aaron Foster, Joseph Brumhead, Patton's family, eight in all, composed the first church. In 1846 a suitable church building was erected in the corporate limits of the town. Patton, Foster, and Isaac Smalley were the leaders in the enterprise. The heavy frame was hewn out with broadaxe, the siding and shingles from everlasting lumber, black walnut. The present structure was built in 1863 by Timothy Roberts of Lexington. In those days people were much agitated over the music question, believing the organ should never take the place of the old time tuning fork. At this time the prominent members were: C. W. Matheny, William Bratton, T. E. Scrimger, William Berryman, J. B. Crumb, Isaac Windle, C. Bailey, D. T. Douglass, M. V. Crumbaker, and the McCrackens. There has gone from

this church into the ministry, George McCracken, George Scrimger, M. V. Crumbaker, Frank Foreman, J. A. Smith and T. B. Adams. The early ministers of the church were Reverends Maynard, Pickard, Webster, Begg, William Cummings, William Royal, Morse, Pearce and Frank Smith. The old building is in a fair state of repair and stands a mute witness of the by-gone days, the membership being transferred to the Lexington congregation.

About the year 1847 the United Brethren Church was erected, Mr. Smalley donating the ground, as he did for most all the churches in the town. This was a large, neat building, frame of course, hewn from hard wood, the outer pieces being from soft pine.

The old church has been the scene of many stirring revivals held by Elder Wimset and others, but as Lexington gradually absorbed the membership, the building was sold ten years ago to Tilden Patton for \$100.00, and now does duty as a cow barn. Conditions have changed, but the message once delivered lives today in the hearts and homes of men and the childrens' children. You may tear down or move away the old buildings, but you can not destroy the characters whose foundations were there laid for the realization of all that is good and noble in life.

In 1832, near the close of the Black Hawk War, the first school house was built. It was situated at the northwest corner of the town, just across the road from where Mrs. George Bradford now lives. The house was built from logs, had a puncheon floor and puncheon seats with four wooden pegs for supports, and a board for a writing desk, which ran along the wall, and a fire-place in one end. This all seems crude to us, and we should appreciate our modern school buildings. The writer knows of a school building of the pioneer days, near Alton, Illinois, that had no floor, and the seats were blocks, sawed from logs, and the desks, the same, except they were higher than the seats.

Deliah Denham taught the first school that we have a record of, which was in 1835; A. J. Flesher was the last to

teach in the log school house which was in 1842. Mr. Flesher commenced teaching when but 18 years of age, he told the writer when he applied for the Lexington school, the school board asked him not a single question as to his qualification to teach, and assigned as the reason, they knew not what to ask. The text books used were any that happened to be in the homes. Mr. Flesher was a banker, bookkeeper, teacher, farmer, merchant, and an all-round good Christian man.

In 1843, a house was moved from Lexington to Pleasant Hill, and converted into a school house. The pine lumber, with which it was sealed, was hauled from Chicago by ox teams, by Aaron Foster and Mr. Smalley. In 1847, Virginia Graves taught, receiving \$2.00 per week and "boarded 'round," some days walking two and one-half miles to the school. The Hon. Owen Lovejoy addressed the people in the old log school house on different occasions; other teachers were W. R. Mahan, Miss Lucas, in 1848, Mrs. Anna Ransom, in 1852, Mr. Burton, in 1855, Miss Hester Arnold in 1859. David Whitmire, Miss Royal, D. G. Turner, Lucy Summer, Jefferson Smith.

A new two-story school building was built in 1857. The frame was of oak, the seats of poplar and walnut. Milton Smith donated the land, the building was known as the Pleasant Hill Academy with Rev. John Dale, as principal, with a full corps of teachers. The champion spellers of the early days were, Miss Kate Hayes, Alice Combs, Selina Crumb, Miss Arnold, Mary Pierson. Among the boys were Eugene Combs, W. A. Smith, George Scrimger, G. H. McCracken. One of the popular teachers was Ira Batterton; he enlisted in Co. K, 8th Illinois Infantry, and was killed at Vicksburg in 1863.

Those teaching in the early '60's were W. N. Combs, Eleanor Johnson, J. A. Laws, S. S. Allen, H. C. Reeves, W. G. Collins. In 1864, William Catherwood. D. T. Douglass. Later on J. W. Curtis, G. J. Ferguson, J. H. Crumbaker, Mrs. Sarah Work, Minnie Loomis, F. P. Casey, Lyon Karr, Miss McGavac, C. H. Pierson, J. B. Dooley, R. M. Crain, J. H. McFarland, G. E. Williamson, Nellie Chalfant, Emmett Douglass. It has been said school teaching is a stepping stone to something

higher. This proved true with A. J. Davis, who in 1893 farmed the Scaper's farm and taught at Pleasant Hill, walking back and forth. There were sixty-four pupils and the price was \$60.00 a month. Mr. Davis married, a neighbor farm girl, Miss Ida Cassedy, went West, and is now a leading citizen and capitalist of Pasadena, California.

We have told much about the rod and the rule, and that "lickin' and larnin'" went together, and that a bundle of switches were always in readiness for fractious fellows. My experience and what I gather from older patrons of the schools is that just the opposite is true. Boys and girls well know the advantages of an education and that their school days were limited on account of necessary work at home, and that they were so eager and anxious to learn, it was a pleasure to teach and help them.

The early doctors of Pleasant Hill were, Dr. J. W. Waters, Dr. Dooley and Dr. D. T. Douglass. Dr. Waters had an extensive practice and became quite wealthy, having large tracts of land near Lexington, and which are now owned by his only son, Frank P. Waters of Shelbina, Missouri.

We have no record showing of any attorney ever practicing in Pleasant Hill.

Fort Patton, so called, was nothing more than Patton's log cabin, with port holes, so that rifles could be used from within if it became necessary, on account of the Indian disturbances in 1832. The neighbors, being far removed from each other, would become unduly excited, and would come here for protection, but nothing further happened. A short distance, southeast, was the Henline settlement, and here a palisade was built, by placing on end, in the ground, split logs, and it was built in the form of a square, with log huts at the corners. This was a safe retreat, but was never used for defense.

Fort Bartholomew was built in 1832 by Gen. Thomas Bartholomew, a distinguished Indian fighter, and was located five miles northwest of Pleasant Hill, in section 13, Money Creek Township, on the land now owned by Mrs. J. B. Dawson, just six rods southeast of the residence; nothing remains to

mark the historic spot. The fort was built of green logs from the timber nearby, the upper story projected, so shots could be fired from the top, should the enemy try to scale the walls or kindle a fire. The fort, as means of defense was never made use of. Gen. Bartholomew was a man of means and influence, owning large tracts of land here, and to him we are indebted for blazing the way in the community. He lies buried in the Clarksville cemetery, west of Lexington, where a splendid monument marks his resting place.

One of the prominent farmers, though not one of the earliest settlers of Pleasant Hill, was James S. Pierson. He was well and favorably known, and owned a valuable farm and timber lands, and dealt largely in sheep. Arthur VanDyke Pierson, his elder son, with the exception of the first four years of his life, spent his entire life in and near Pleasant Hill. His was an honored parentage, it is a great inheritance to come of noble and worthy lineage. He was educated in the common schools, but mostly in the school of experience. He was connected with the schools of Pleasant Hill, either as a director or the clerk of the school board for almost twenty-five years. Mr. Pierson did, what was the common practice in the early days, married a neighbor girl of the district school, Miss Carrie Smith, a daughter of Milton Smith, whose farm adjoined the Pierson farm. From an early date Mr. Pierson was much interested in matters both historical and educational, and the printed pages left by him, from time to time, are not only appreciated, but of historic interest, and a value to the community, as well as to the State. Mr. Pierson was always ready to lend a helping hand to all activities toward the community's betterment. In the early days he was a member of the Pleasant Hill Public Library, and at the time of his death he was the president of the Lexington Public Library. He was a member of the McLean County Historical Society, the State Historical Society, the International Historical Society, and was a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, and contributed to these societies often with written articles, as well as to the local and county papers. He was also a member of the

Pleasant Hill Cemetery Association. Miss Anna Pierson, his daughter, is not only keeping step, but is carrying on all business activities of her father.

One of the Christian veterans, and pioneers of Pleasant Hill is Mrs. Martha Bradford, who is hale and hearty at the age of ninety-two years, and is now living on what is known as the Joseph Enoch farm, adjoining the town on the Northwest. Mrs. Bradford is, and has been a conscientious Christian and a member of the Presbyterian faith from early womanhood. Her people were Congregationalists, and this is why she has been a reader of the Congregationalist through most of its history. Her life is a splendid commentary of the most wonderful century of human civilization. With her husband, George Bradford, she came from Dedham, Massachusetts, in 1854. She has lived a life of faith and Christian service, and she lives on with an interest quick to the joys and trials of her fellowmen, until it shall please her Master to call her home.

This brief sketch would not be complete, if I did not speak of her only daughter, Miss Mary, who is the stay and solace of her aged mother. Dr. Bradford chose the work of a missionary, as her life work, and thoroughly prepared herself in the Wesleyan University of Bloomington, and then to the best medical schools, for it was a medical missionary she was to be, and was until her mother called her home. She was located in Tabriz, Persia, and she was there in the work for many years, doing the Master's work with all earnestness. To reach Tabriz, requires 8,000 miles of travel, counting the homeward trip, which was made on a furlough. Dr. Bradford has traveled 32,000 miles on land and sea. She gave seventeen of the best years of her life to the Christian cause she well and wisely planned.

Nicholas Jesuman of Pleasant Hill, was one of the four from McLean County, who received a Government Medal for distinguished bravery on the field of battle, during the War of the Rebellion.

Benjamin Patton "showed his faith by his works" and did a gracious act when he deeded his 166 acre farm, east of Pleasant Hill well worth \$50,000, to the South African Metho-

dist Mission; for the poor black slave Lincoln freed, it was that helped to win the war in 1861, that are helping to win the war now, and it was they that donated their hard earned dollars earned by free labor that helped to rear the marble shaft at Springfield, Illinois, that marks the resting place of Lincoln, and reveres his memory.

I have now hastily traced the manner, in which the quaint old town of Pleasant Hill, was started, how the reign was settled, where the work began, and the order in which population spread. I have also referred to some of the men and women, who undertook the laborious task of opening up the highway, and have alluded to the predominating character without which it were impossible for them to have succeeded in their arduous undertaking; and now while all patriotic citizens are concerned in solving the present problems before our country, while every hand is stretched out to aid the suffering in our own and foreign lands brought on by the World's War—would it not be well and patriotic to pause a moment to pay a living tribute to our forefathers and mothers, and to give a grateful thought in acknowledgment of our debt to the men and women who fought with Indian savages when need be to defend their homesteads and villages from extermination, who went cold and hungry, who faced pestilence and disease, that they might bequeath to us, their descendants, a civilization, that is so rich and so complete?

REMINISCENCES OF THE BLACK HAWK WAR. AN
INTERESTING LETTER FROM GEN. ROBERT
ANDERSON TO E. B. WASHBURN—CONTRIBUTED
BY SIDNEY S. BREESE.

MRS. JESSIE PALMER WEBER,
Secretary Illinois State Historical Society,
State House, Springfield, Illinois.

DEAR MRS. WEBER:

The enclosure relative to the Black Hawk War was sent to me by my cousin James B. Breese of Trenton, New Jersey.

This was given to him by a daughter of Robert Anderson, whom he just met recently at Lakewood, New Jersey.

Of this lady (Mrs. Eba Anderson Lawton), he says, "The lady who gave me this copy was a daughter of Robert Anderson. She was a very interesting lady indeed and knew many of our family connections."

I am going to ask that you make a copy of the enclosure and after doing so kindly return original to me, that I may send it to my cousin, who requested that it be returned.

You will note that there is a postscript to this letter evidently written by one General Vale, in which he comments on the letter.

These pages are evidently the original manuscript of some book, or memoirs, or something of that sort.

Minister Washburne tells the story of this episode in his career with a remarkable simplicity and modesty.

Very truly yours,

SIDNEY S. BREESE.